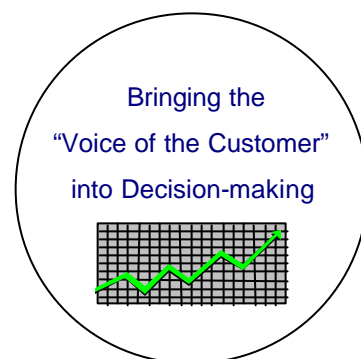


# SURVEY OF VETERANS SATISFACTION WITH THE VA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM REHABILITATION PHASE

2002 Summary Report  
National Results and Performance Trends



Surveys and Research Staff  
Office of Performance Analysis and Integrity  
Veterans Benefits Administration  
April 2003

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# *Executive Summary*

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- Nationally, 86.2 percent of all surveyed veterans were very or somewhat satisfied with the rehabilitation process in 2002. This *is a significant increase* from the previous year's performance of 82.9 percent.
- The following items were identified as areas of importance to satisfaction with rehabilitation on which VA is performing well (more than 75 percent of veterans indicated satisfaction):
  - Respondent is very or somewhat satisfied with rehabilitation goal.**
  - Counselor completely or mostly explained all benefits and services available during rehabilitation program.**
  - Counselor fully addresses all questions, concerns and complaints.**
- The following items were identified as areas of importance to satisfaction with rehabilitation on which VA could be performing better (less than 75 percent of veterans indicated satisfaction):
  - Counselor gives good information and advice.**
  - Counselor has provided assistance according to respondent's individual needs.**
  - Reasons for decisions counselor makes regarding respondent's particular program are clearly explained.**
  - Counselor shows a caring and compassionate attitude.**
  - Counselor shows a genuine interest in respondent's progress.**
  - Counselor is responsive to needs.**
  - Counselor listens to respondent's feelings and concerns.**
  - Counselor is available when needed.**
  - Specialist/counselor helps respondent focus on employment goal.**
  - Specialist/counselor is concerned about quality of job placement.**
  - Very or somewhat easy to get information from VR&E program.**
- These four areas were identified as having the greatest influence on whether or not a veteran will be satisfied with the rehabilitation process. VA should focus on improving and/or maintaining customer satisfaction in these areas in order to ensure veteran satisfaction with rehabilitation:
  - Respondent very or somewhat satisfied with rehabilitation goal selected.**
  - Counselor is responsive to needs.**
  - Counselor fully addressed all questions, concerns or complaints.**
  - Counselor is available when needed.**

# Executive Summary

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- VR&E's **performance increased significantly** on these customer service items relating to the rehabilitation process between 2001 and 2002. A summary of 2001 and 2002 national performance on each of the items follows below:

Question	2001	2002
Percent who did not have difficulty obtaining benefits during rehabilitation phase	62.4	66.8
Percent who strongly agreed or agreed that counselor provided assistance according to their individual needs	71.8	74.1
Percent who said counselor fully addressed all their questions, concerns and complaints	79.6	81.7
Percent who strongly agreed or agreed that counselor/specialist is knowledgeable regarding employment markets*	45.0	59.5
Percent who strongly agreed or agreed that counselor/specialist understands their occupational/vocational goals*	68.9	76.4
Percent who strongly agreed or agreed that counselor/specialist helps them focus on their employment goal*	52.5	65.6
Percent who strongly agreed or agreed that counselor/specialist is concerned about the quality of their job placement*	50.6	62.3
Percent who felt it was very or somewhat easy to obtain information from VR&E program	67.9	70.4
Percent who felt VR&E program treated them as an individual, not just a case to be managed	74.0	77.5
Percent who felt that the rehabilitation process reflected the courtesy, compassion and respect due to a U.S. veteran	77.9	81.4
Percent who were very or somewhat satisfied with rehabilitation phase of plan	82.9	86.2
Percent who would recommend VR&E program to other disabled veterans	95.5	97.1

\* The significant increase shown in these questions should be interpreted with caution due to a change in the questionnaire between 2001 and 2002. In 2001 all survey respondents were directed to answer these questions, but in 2002 respondents who reported that they had not received any employment services were directed to skip over these questions to the next section.

- VR&E's **performance did not decrease significantly** on any customer service items relating to the rehabilitation process between 2001 and 2002.

# *Introduction and Methodology*

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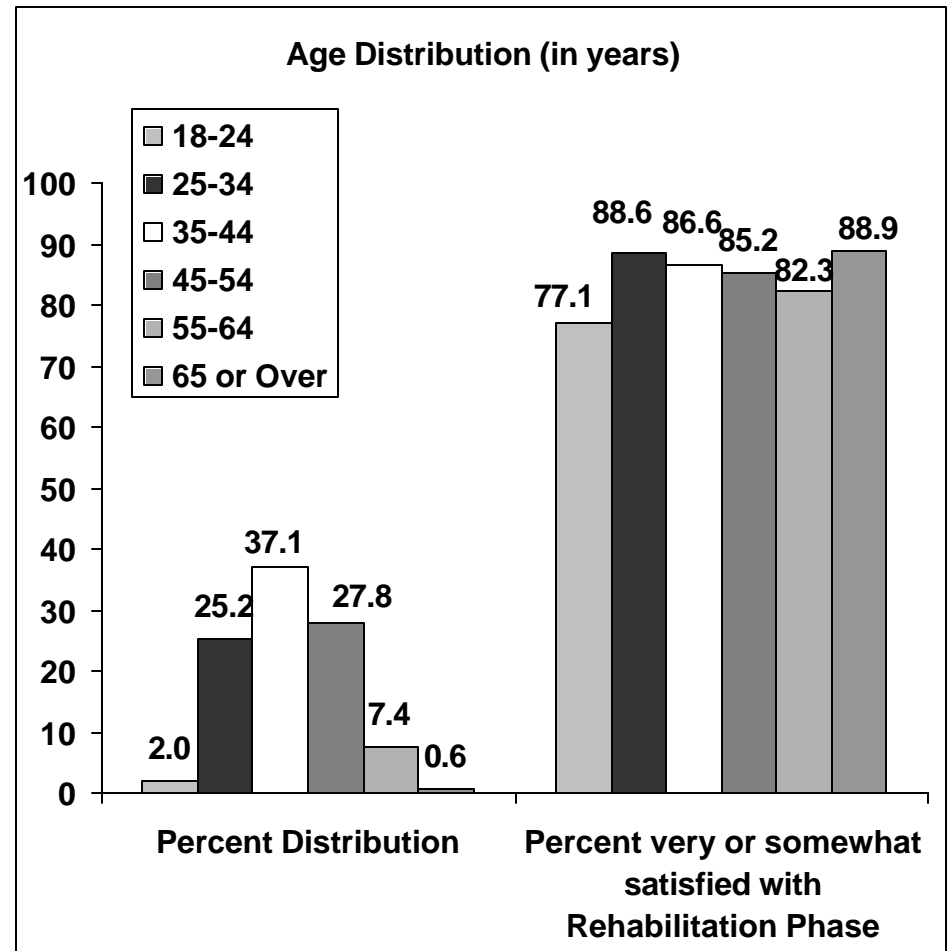
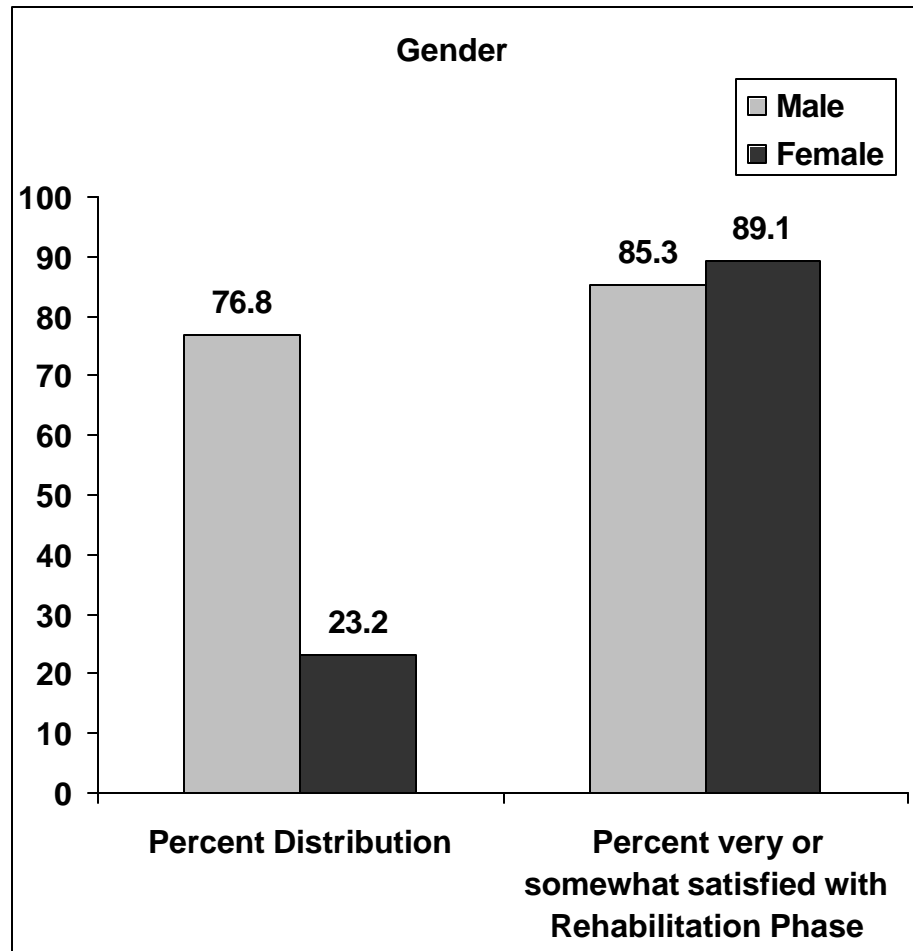
This document presents the results of the 2002 *Survey of Veterans Satisfaction With the VA Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program, Rehabilitation Phase* for the Nation on selected survey questions. Data are given for 2001 and 2002, and in certain cases 1999 and 2000; and results were significance-tested for performance differences between 2001 and 2002.

The data in this report were collected from December of 2002 to February of 2003 using mailed questionnaires. The sample consisted of 6,500 persons (out of a total population of 35,372 persons) who were in the rehabilitation phase for longer than four months or who had just completed the rehabilitation phase in the previous four months. This included those who interrupted or discontinued the program at any time between the period the sample was drawn and data collection was complete. The sample was drawn proportionate to the number of cases within each Regional Office (RO), but was not designed to yield data for any one RO specifically. A total of 3,574 respondents completed the Rehabilitation Phase questionnaire for a response rate of 55.0 percent.

The questionnaire was designed by VBA and is based on information gathered from focus groups with veterans and front-line VR&E employees. It was tested for clarity and relevance in cognitive interviews with veterans, and then pretested in the field from June to August 1999. Using the information from the pretest reports, the VBA Surveys and Research Staff and Caliber Associates modified the questionnaire. An additional section regarding employment services was added to the questionnaire for the 2001 survey administration. Other minor changes that have been made since the pretest are detailed in the national reports produced by Caliber Associates. The 2002 Rehabilitation questionnaire is included in this report as an Appendix.

It should be noted that the quantitative data shown in this report represent valid measurements of various elements of customer satisfaction and, as such, are more reliable than qualitative sources of information such as comment cards or focus groups. Survey results provide data used to monitor VBA's performance against customer service standards, provide insight into the key drivers of satisfaction with the VR&E program, and provide the customers' views of organizational performance as required by the Government Performance and Results Act. It is also likely that this information will be included as part of the ongoing Departmental review of the entire VR&E program.

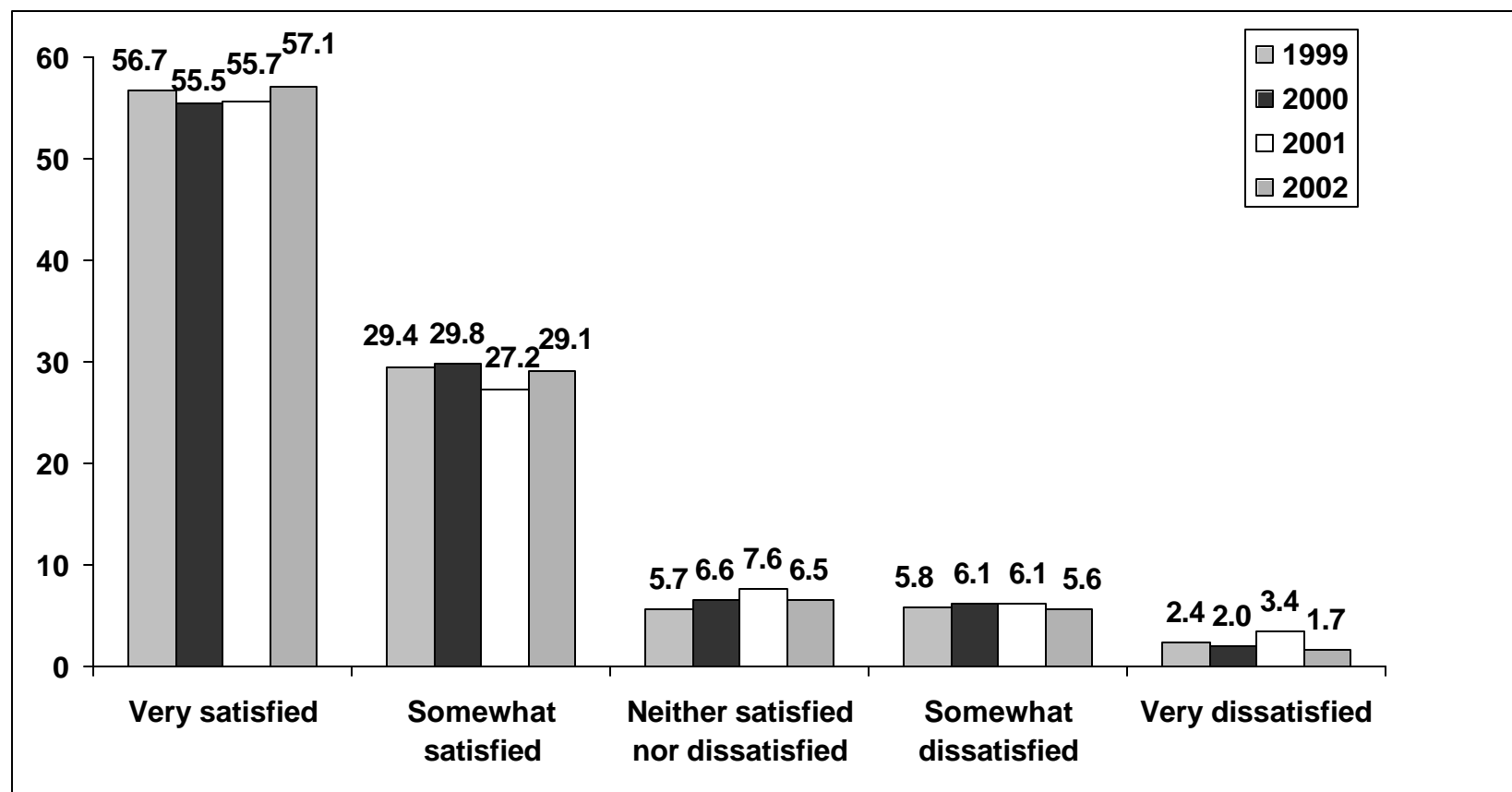
## ***Respondent Characteristics by Satisfaction with Phase***



- The majority of the respondents were male (76.8 percent), and over one-third (37.1 percent) of respondents were between the ages of 35 and 44.
- Respondents between the ages of 18 and 24 are the least satisfied among the different age groups, with 77.1 percent being very or somewhat satisfied with the phase.

## *Satisfaction with Rehabilitation Phase*

### Overall Satisfaction with Rehabilitation Phase, 1999-2002



There was a **significant increase** in overall satisfaction with the rehabilitation phase from 2001 to 2002. The percent of those very or somewhat satisfied increased from 82.9 percent in 2001 to 86.2 percent in 2002. Also, the percent of those very dissatisfied decreased from 3.4 percent in 2001 to 1.7 percent in 2002.



# *Satisfaction with Rehabilitation Phase*

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## Introduction to Quadrant Analysis

Quadrant analysis is a useful tool in determining which individual performance areas need improvement in order to raise the overall quality of service. The analysis involves determining the importance of individual performance areas (how meaningful an area is to the veteran) and VA's performance in each area. Generally, items with high importance but relatively low performance are those which deserve immediate attention.

Each of the variables represented in the Quadrant Analysis graph are plotted on the basis of:

- 1) **Importance:** This is represented by a variable's correlation with the *overall satisfaction with the particular phase* of the VR&E program. These correlations determine the degree to which variables are related to overall satisfaction. Zero indicates no correlation, and 1 indicates perfect correlation. The closer a variable's correlation (Importance) is to 1, the stronger that variable's relationship is with the overall satisfaction with the particular phase. *Variables that have stronger correlations are considered to have higher importance.*
- 2) **Performance:** This is represented by a variable's topbox percent (the percent of people who answered positively to a performance item). Topbox percents represent how well VA is performing within a given area (for example, the percent who thought their counselor completely or mostly understood their feelings and concerns). *The higher the percent, the better VA is performing.*

The quadrant analysis is divided into four quadrants (sections) based on the following combinations of the plotted location of a variable:

**Quadrant I: Critical Improvement Areas (high importance, low performance)**

**Quadrant II: Maintain Relationship Building Variables (high importance, high performance)**

**Quadrant III: Lower Return on High Performance (low importance, high performance)**

**Quadrant IV: Lower Return on Investment (low importance, low performance)**

The horizontal line in the plot represents importance and is placed at .45, which indicates relatively high correlation. The vertical line represents performance and is placed at a percentile representing the average of the performance items, (rounded up or down in increments of 5 percent). The quadrant lines can be moved up or down, left or right, to include more or fewer items in each quadrant. The plotted numbers within each section of the graph correspond with the performance items listed on the following page. These numbers also refer to the question numbers used in the questionnaire.

# *Satisfaction with Rehabilitation Phase*

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## Items in Quadrant Analysis

**Quadrant I** contains eleven (11) items on which VA is not performing as well as it could be, but which significantly impacts veterans satisfaction with the rehabilitation phase.

- **Question 16** Counselor gives good information and advice.
- **Question 18** Counselor has provided assistance according to respondent's individual needs.
- **Question 19** Reasons for decisions counselor makes regarding respondent's particular program are clearly explained.
- **Question 20** Counselor shows a caring and compassionate attitude.
- **Question 21** Counselor shows a genuine interest in respondent's progress.
- **Question 23** Counselor is responsive to needs.
- **Question 24** Counselor listens to respondent's feelings and concerns.
- **Question 25** Counselor is available when needed.
- **Question 42** Specialist/counselor helps respondent focus on employment goal.
- **Question 43** Specialist/counselor is concerned about quality of job placement.
- **Question 46** Very or somewhat easy to get information from VR&E program.

**Quadrant II** contains three (3) items on which VA is performing well and which are important to overall satisfaction. VA should maintain current practices and resources for these items so that performance does not decline and negatively affect satisfaction.

- **Question 2** Very or somewhat satisfied with rehabilitation goal.
- **Question 6** Counselor completely or mostly explained all benefits and services available during rehabilitation program.
- **Question 36** Counselor fully addresses all questions, concerns and complaints.

# *Satisfaction with Rehabilitation Phase*

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## Items in Quadrant Analysis

**Quadrant III** contains nine (9) items on which VA is performing well but which, while important to overall satisfaction, do not have as great an impact as other items.

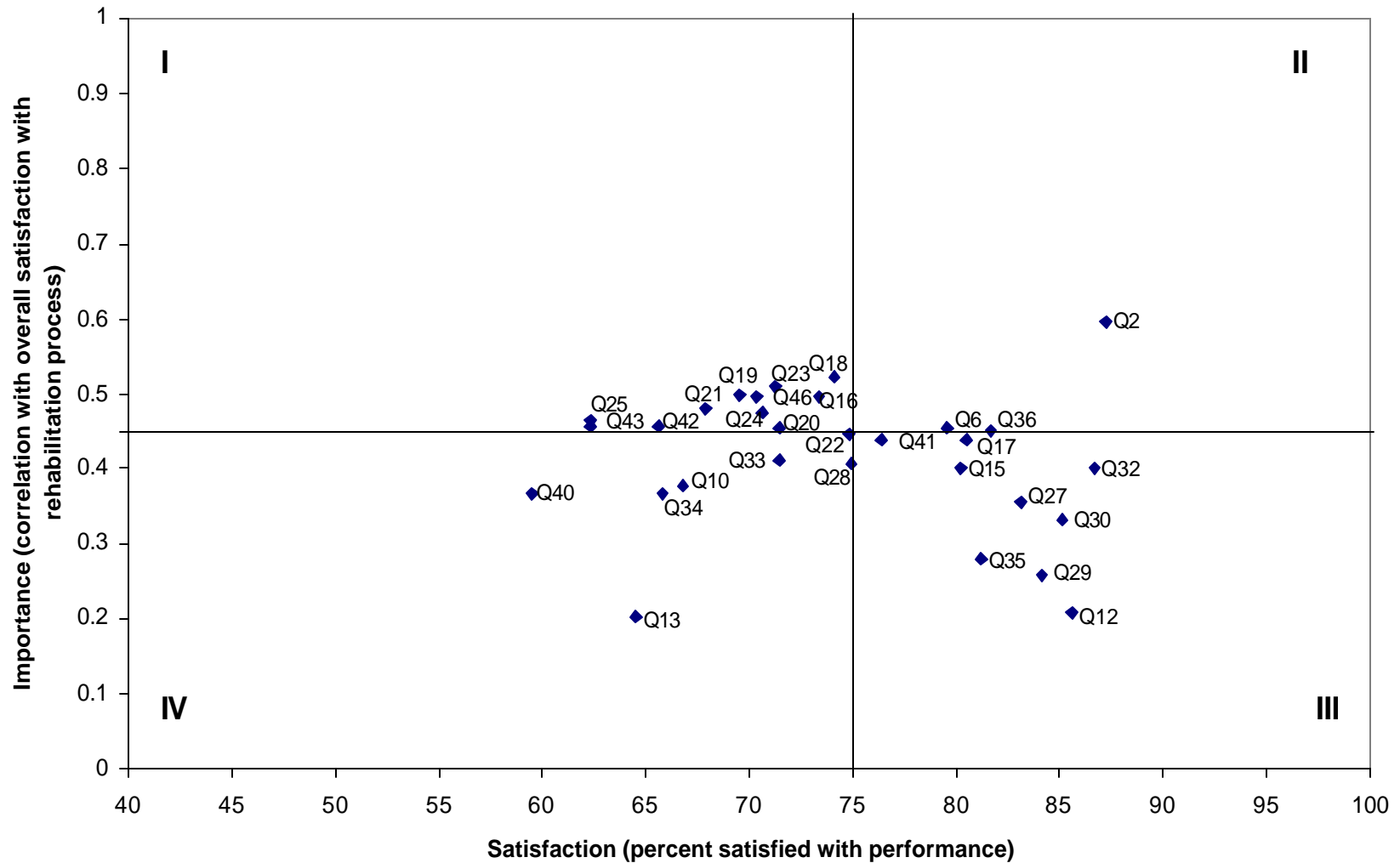
- **Question 12** Never had to borrow or pay unexpected out-of-pocket expenses in order to enroll or stay enrolled in training or education because VA did not provide payments on time.
- **Question 15** Respondent has clear understanding of respective responsibilities of himself and his counselor.
- **Question 17** Counselor is knowledgeable regarding VA's vocational rehabilitation program.
- **Question 27** Number and length of meetings with counselor adequate to meet respondent's needs.
- **Question 29** Location of meetings was very or somewhat convenient.
- **Question 30** Time scheduled for meetings was very or somewhat convenient.
- **Question 32** Counselor was very or somewhat responsive to respondent's primary method of contact.
- **Question 35** Respondent was able to access voice mail and have counselor return call.
- **Question 41** Specialist/counselor understands occupational/vocational goals.

**Quadrant IV** contains seven (7) items on which VA is not performing as well as it could, but which are also not considered to have as great an impact on overall satisfaction as other items. There is a lower return on investment in these items, but, given resources, improvement could be sought.

- **Question 10** Counselor gives good information and advice.
- **Question 13** Never had to borrow or pay unexpected out-of-pocket expenses in order to obtain needed supplies or benefits because VA did not provide them when needed.
- **Question 22** Counselor has a communication style that is easy to understand.
- **Question 28** Got all or most of needed information from meetings with counselor.
- **Question 33** Got all or most of needed information from primary method of contact with counselor.
- **Question 34** Able to get needed information on first call or contact.
- **Question 40** Specialist/counselor is knowledgeable regarding employment markets.

# *Satisfaction with Rehabilitation Phase*

## Quadrant Analysis



# *Satisfaction with Rehabilitation Phase*

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## Predictors of Satisfaction with Rehabilitation Phase (Logistic Regression)

Logistic regression is a statistical procedure used to predict the likelihood that an event will occur. The object is to use information from several predictor variables (or, independent variables) to determine which of those variables can correctly predict responses on a dependent variable, this means that by improving performance in certain individual service areas, there is a definite likelihood that we will increase a veteran's satisfaction with the overall process. The logistic regression model tells us which predictor variables relate with the dependent variable and which have the strongest influence.

The logistic regression model presented here used *satisfaction with the rehabilitation phase* as the dependent variable. The responses to this variable were dichotomized into either *satisfied* (responses of very or somewhat satisfied) and *not satisfied* (responses of neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied).

Four (4) independent variables were used in this model:

- 1) How satisfied are you with the rehabilitation goal you and your counselor selected?
- 2) Your counselor is responsive to your needs.
- 3) Your counselor is available when needed.
- 4) Does your counselor fully address all your questions, concerns, or complaints?

Variables in the logistic regression summary table on the next page are presented with their respective **odds ratio statistics** and are **listed in order of predictive strength**. Odds ratios estimate how much more likely an individual is to end up in the group we are trying to predict (satisfaction) than in the other group (dissatisfaction). For example, veterans who felt their counselor was responsive to their needs were 2.8 times more likely to be satisfied than veterans who feel that their counselor was not responsive to their needs.

The logistic regression summary table also includes a **percent correctly classified as either satisfied or dissatisfied**. This percentage summarizes the "fit" between the actual and predicted classifications of satisfaction/dissatisfaction. The logistic regression procedure uses information from each of the predictor variables in a model and classifies individuals into one of the two target groups (satisfied or not satisfied). It then looks at how each individual was actually classified (how each respondent actually responded) and compares its prediction of a response with the actual response. The closer this percentage is to 100, the more accurate the model is in predicting satisfaction/dissatisfaction

## *Satisfaction with Rehabilitation Phase*

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### Predictors of Satisfaction with Rehabilitation Phase (Logistic Regression)

Predictor Variable	Odds Ratio
Respondent very or somewhat satisfied with rehabilitation goal selected	8.36
Counselor is responsive to needs	2.81
Counselor fully addressed all questions, concerns or complaints	2.15
Counselor is available when needed	1.62

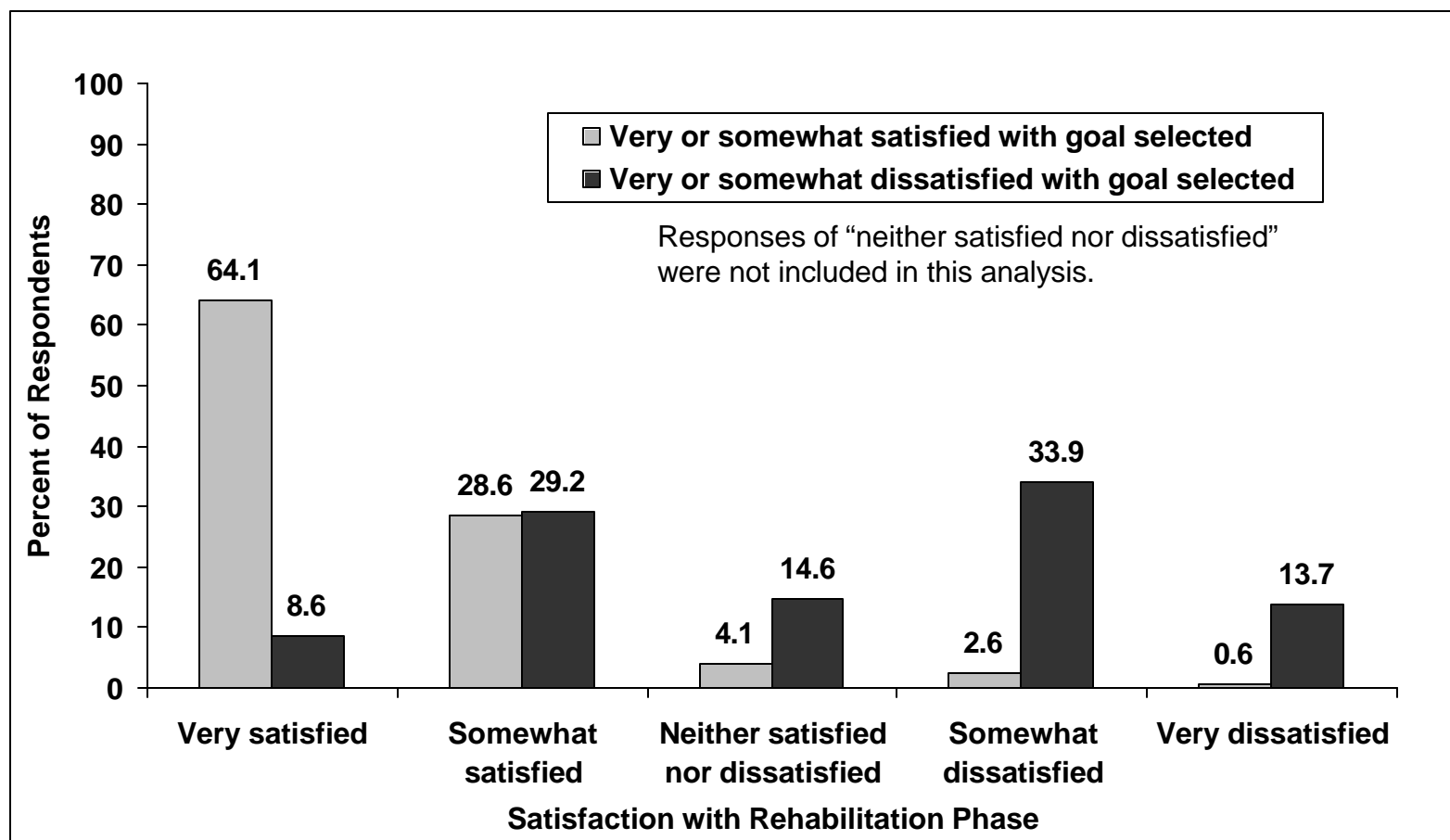
**Percent correctly classified as either satisfied or dissatisfied: 89.6%**

**Number of cases included in this analysis: 3,085**

- Considering the effects of all four predictor variables, **satisfaction with the rehabilitation goal** was the strongest predictor of satisfaction with the rehabilitation phase. Veterans who were very or somewhat satisfied with the rehabilitation goal selected were over 8 times more likely to be satisfied with the rehabilitation phase than veterans who were not satisfied with their goal.
- Respondents who thought the counselor was responsive to their needs were almost 3 times more likely to be satisfied with the rehabilitation phase than those who did not feel that the counselor was responsive to their needs.
- Veterans who had their questions fully addressed by their counselor were 2 times more likely to be satisfied with the rehabilitation phase than veterans who had questions that their counselor was not able to fully address.
- Respondents who thought their counselor was available when needed were 1.6 times more likely to be satisfied with the rehabilitation phase than those who did not feel that their counselor was available.

## ***Influences on Overall Satisfaction with Rehabilitation Phase***

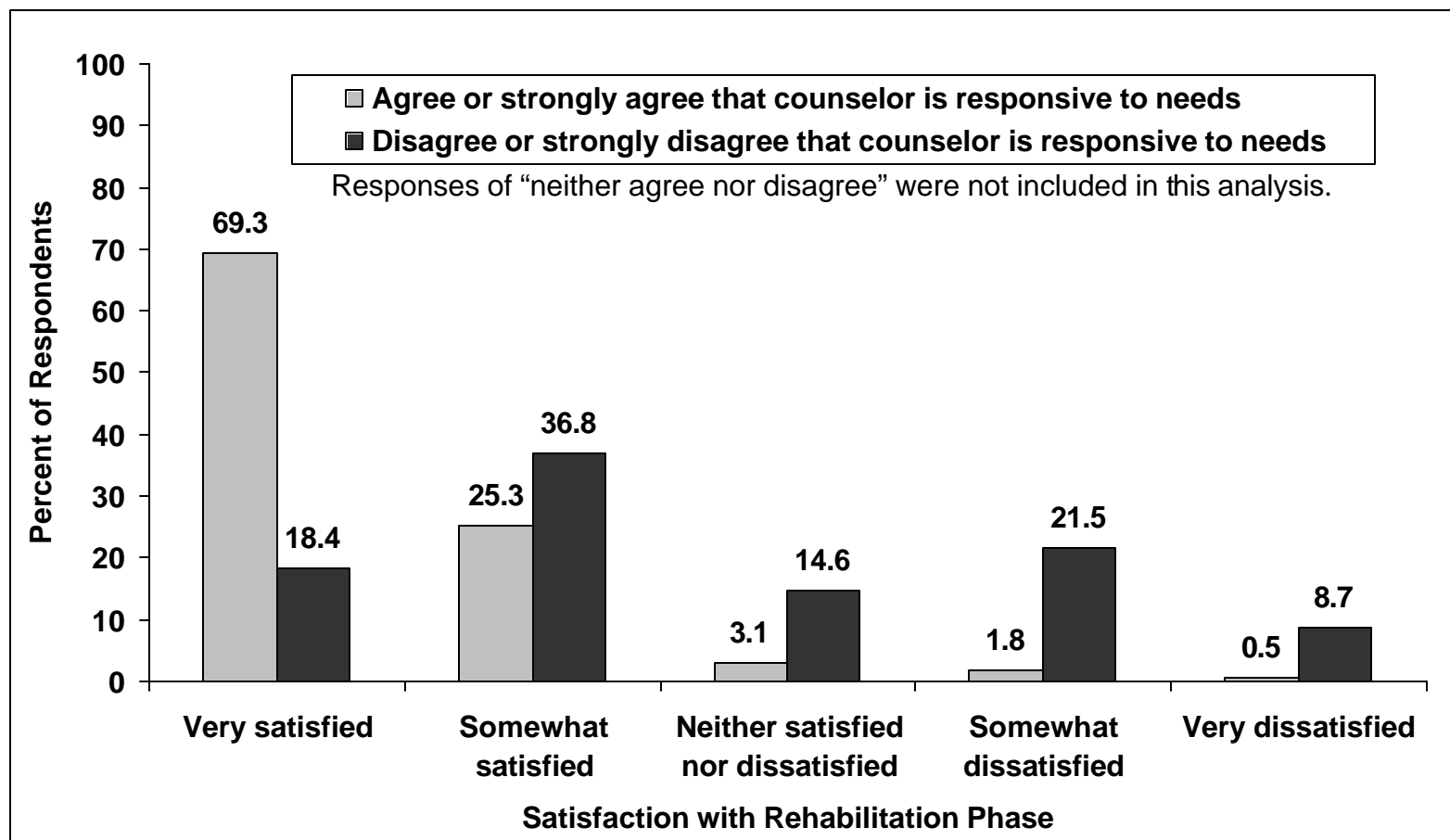
### Overall Satisfaction with Rehabilitation Phase by Satisfaction with Rehabilitation Goal Respondent and Counselor Selected



Satisfaction with the rehabilitation goal selected has consistently been very important to overall satisfaction with the rehabilitation phase. Nine out of ten respondents (92.7 percent) who were very or somewhat satisfied with the rehabilitation goal selected were also very or somewhat satisfied with the rehabilitation phase vs. only 37.8 percent of those who were very or somewhat dissatisfied with the rehabilitation goal selected.

## ***Influences on Overall Satisfaction with Rehabilitation Phase***

Overall Satisfaction with Rehabilitation Phase by Whether Respondents Agree that Counselor is Responsive to Their Needs

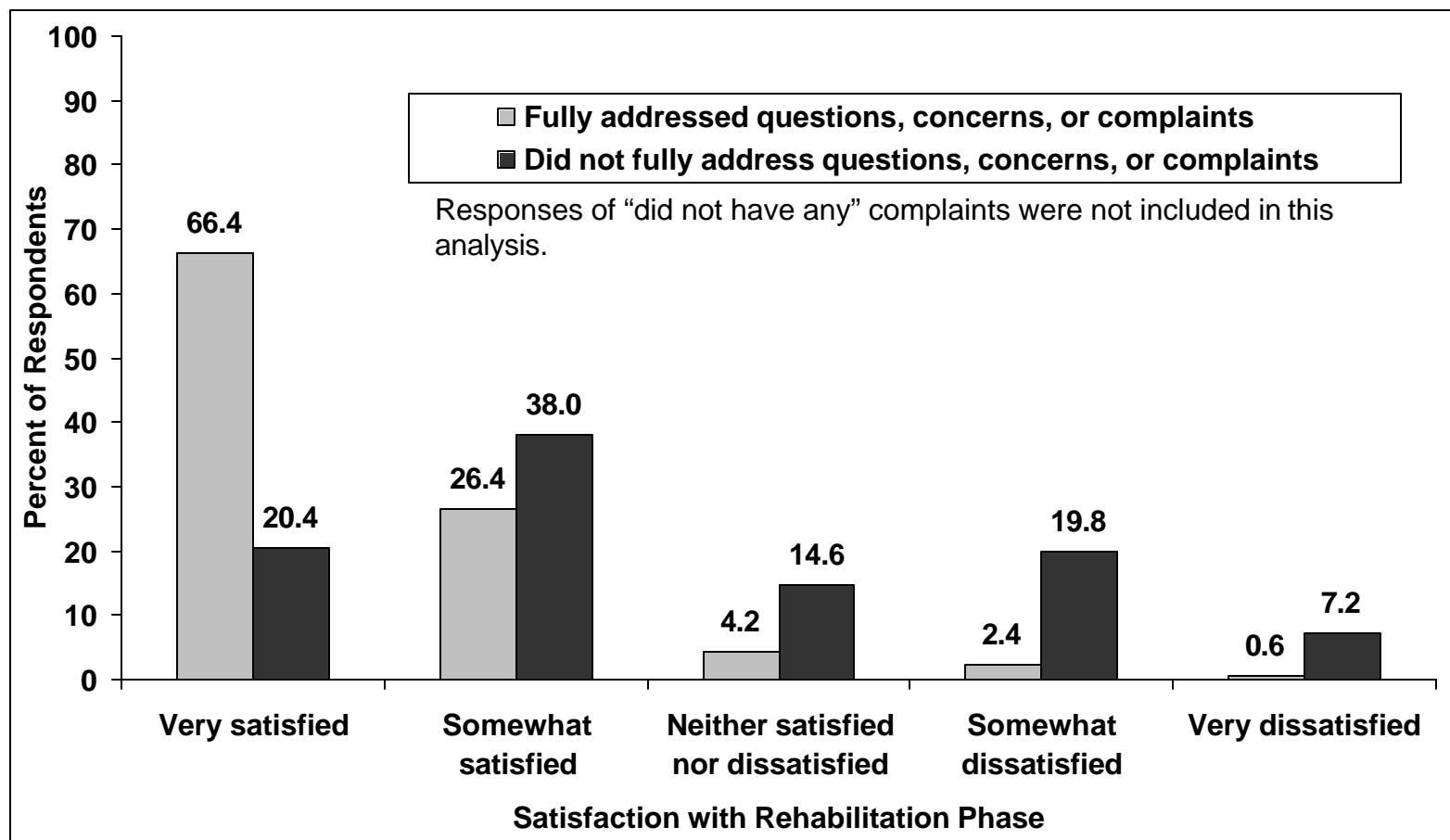


Over nine in ten (94.6 percent) of those who thought their counselor was responsive to their needs were very or somewhat satisfied with the rehabilitation phase, showing that the counseling relationship has a strong influence on a veteran's overall satisfaction with the phase.



## ***Influences on Overall Satisfaction with Rehabilitation Phase***

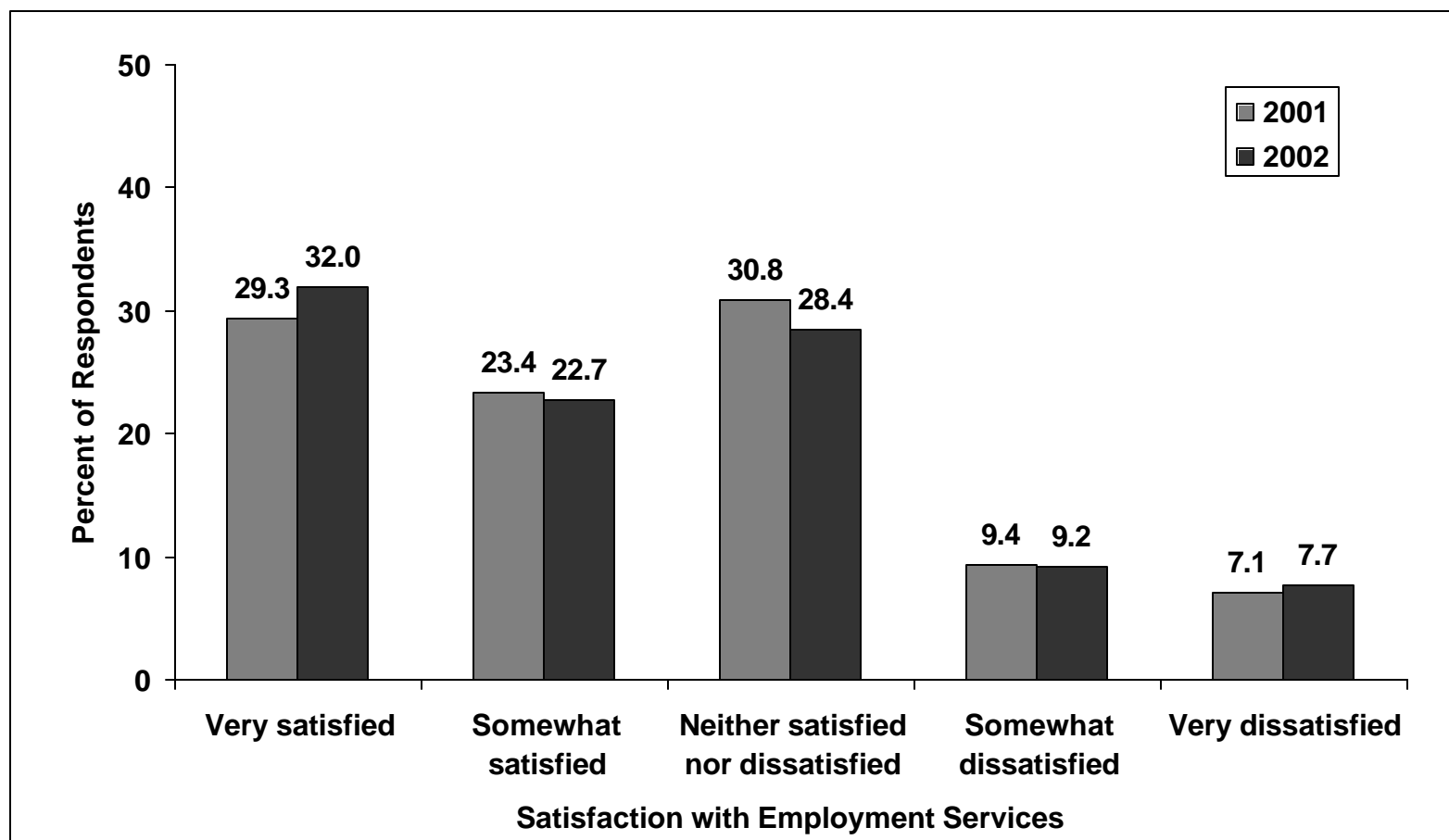
Overall Satisfaction with Rehabilitation Phase by Whether Counselor Fully Addressed all Questions, Concerns and Complaints



Whether or not the counselor was able to fully address all of the respondent's questions, concerns, or complaints was very important to their overall satisfaction with the rehabilitation phase. Two-thirds of respondents who felt their questions were fully addressed were **very** satisfied with the rehabilitation phase, compared to only 20.4 percent of those who felt their concerns were not fully addressed.

## ***Employment Services During Rehabilitation Phase***

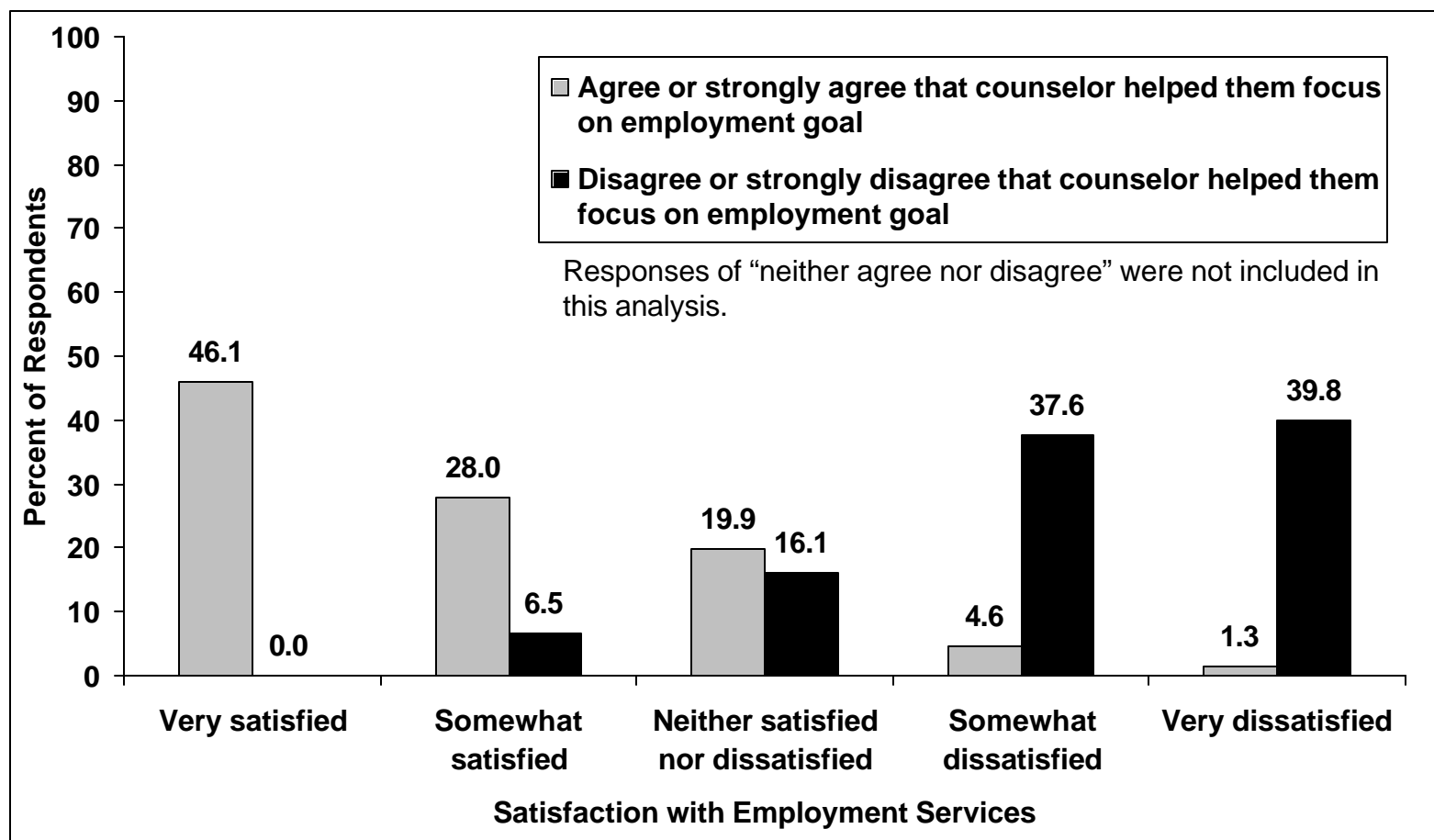
### **Overall Satisfaction with Employment Services (of Those Who Have Received Employment Services During Rehabilitation Phase)**



A new section was added to the Rehabilitation questionnaire in 2001 to determine veterans satisfaction with any employment services received as part of the rehabilitation phase. Overall, of those who said they received employment services during this phase, 54.7 percent were very or somewhat satisfied with the services provided in 2002. This is not a significant increase over the 2001 percentage. A large percentage of respondents in both 2001 and 2002 (30.8 and 28.4 percent, respectively) reported they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, which may indicate that they have not had enough experience with employment services during this phase to make a determination.

## *Employment Services During Rehabilitation Phase*

### Overall Satisfaction with Employment Services by Whether Specialist/Counselor Helped Respondent Focus on Employment Goal



Of those who received employment services during the rehabilitation phase, whether or not the counselor helped them focus on their employment goal had a significant impact on their overall satisfaction with the employment services received. Almost half (46.1 percent) of respondents who felt the counselor helped them focus on their employment goal were **very** satisfied with the employment services received, compared to none of those who felt the counselor did not help them focus on their goal.